

IVRS Consumers

Marvin Van Beek named Entrepreneur of the year

What is Marvin Van Beek's secret to becoming a successful entrepreneur?

"If you put your mind to it you can do whatever you want to," he said.

Nearly four years ago, this Inwood resident started his own business raising exotic water fowl and pheasants.

Running his own business fulfills one of Van Beek's goals, but he had many obstacles to overcome.

Because he has no arms, initially Van Beek had to carry sacks of feed and pails in his teeth.

Counselor April Stotz from Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Sheldon Office, coordinated with Easter Seals to provide an automatic feeding system, a cleaning system and an automatic watering system in the nursery.

"She helped me really grow it," Van Beek said of Stotz.

Now Van Beek can focus on raising 300 to 400 exotic ducks from as far away as Africa, South America and Russia. He also raises pheasants for hunting preserves and has the ability to incubate up 30,000 eggs.

To provide ideal conditions for waterfowl, Van Beek maintains 11 ponds that use water pumps to recycle the water to keep them fresh.

Van Beek admits that it's a unique business endeavor.

"There's not many of us doing it," he said.

But Van Beek can't imagine doing anything else.

"That's one thing I like - you're not doing the same thing day after day," he said. "You never know what you get to do."

At a given time, Van Beek could be doing research on one of the 71 breeds of ducks he raises, putting in new nest boxes or performing a duck rescue.

Much of his business is conducted on the Internet – whether it's finding a new exotic breed to purchase or selling ducks and pheasants for taxidermy or hunting preserves.

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services Counselor April Stotz said she enjoyed working with Van Beek.

"He has such a positive outlook on life and is well-liked by everyone," she said.

Van Beek finds his work both challenging and fulfilling.

"It takes patience and time and sometimes it's frustrating – there's new wrinkles every day," Van Beek said. "But it's rewarding being your own boss – it's been good."



In October, the Commission of Persons with Disabilities named Marvin Van Beek the 2008 Entrepreneur of the Year.